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Learning for a Lifetime

November 3, 2016

Dear Parents/Guardians,

In light of the tragic incident in Abbotsford earlier this week, we take this opportunity to follow up with our school communities with respect to student well-being. We are deeply saddened by the other day's events and our thoughts are with the families, students, staff and community in Abbotsford.

Helping our children and youth navigate the complexities of their thoughts and emotions, and the amount of media exposure in this digital age takes the effort of all the adults in our District. Our staff is trained to support students who demonstrate a need, so please encourage your children to seek assistance of a trusted adult if needed.

As parents, here are some helpful tips for you to assist your children during times of difficulty or grief:

Be yourself – Demonstrate your natural concern calmly and in your own words.

Be available – Spend time with your child. Attempt to distract your child by reading, walking, going to a movie, etc.

Listen – Let your child express his/her thoughts, concerns, feelings, and perceptions in a nonjudgmental, emotionally safe environment.

Explain – Talk about what you know in short, truthful statements. Don't be afraid to admit that you do not have all the answers.

Do not speculate.

Develop resiliency – Your child will look to you for reassurance. Do not convey your own feelings of distress, but rather let your child know that they will get through this difficult period.

Provide comfort – Physical and verbal comforts are great healers.

Attend to physical manifestations of trauma - Children will often complain of headaches, stomach aches, backaches, etc. Monitor physical symptoms such as loss of appetite, anxiety, sleep disturbance, etc. and determine whether medical intervention is required.

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Maintain regular routines – As much as possible, attempt to provide normalcy to your child. Humans are creatures of habit and derive comfort from regular routines.

Monitor media exposure – Do not overexpose your child to media reports (especially preschool and elementary age children).

Seek additional support – When appropriate, your child should be directed to community support agencies.

We can assure you that we take the safety of all our students very seriously. Incidents like these remind us of the importance of all our protocols which we have in place to ensure the safety of students and staff. Please know that we remain mindful, caring and vigilant.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patricia Gartland". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "P".

Patricia Gartland
Superintendent of Schools
SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 43 (COQUITLAM)